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Ron Atkins MP
British Rail

George Smith
Cuts in Construction

Basil Davidson
The Bantustans

Urban Karlsson
Sweden's Election

Book reviews by Joe Ashton MP : Callaghan and Ivor Montagu : Needham's Philosophy

LABOUR MONTHLY

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Survey—December 8, 1976

'YE GODS, DO WE *NEVER* LEARN?'

> **'Talk about centralisation!**
> **'The credit system, which has its centre in the so-called national banks and the great money-lenders and usurers about them, is an enormous centralisation, and gives to this class of parasites a fabulous power, not only to despoil periodically the industrial capitalists, but also to interfere in actual production in a most dangerous manner—and this gang knows nothing about production and has nothing to do with it. The Acts of 1844 and 1845 are proofs of the growing power of these bandits, who are joined by the financiers and stock jobbers.'**
> KARL MARX (edited F. Engels), *Capital*, Vol III, 1894.
>
> **'At its imperialist stage, finance capital's primary need is to find spheres of overseas investment which will return profits at a greater rate than can be returned at home. The export of capital, therefore, becomes the dynamo of imperialism.'**
> KWAME NKRUMAH, *Neo-Colonialism*, 1965.
>
> **'Professor Milton Friedman . . . noted that if the government's role in industry was drastically reduced, then there would be a simultaneous reduction in the hold of the unions.'**
> *TIMES*, November 30, 1976.

On November 19 last year, *Labour Weekly* vigorously attacked the 'smear campaigns' which the right-extremists in the Labour Party (now openly supported by Callaghan and Wilson) have unleashed. 'Labour's right joins the Tory witch-hunt,' it declared, comparing the 'vicious smear campaign against left-wing Labour MPs' with 'the witch-hunts of the Macarthy era.' It is significant that Mr Heath, still no doubt smarting from his confrontation with the miners, has urged his fellow Conservatives to 'forget their "unworthy" war against scroungers and left-wing MPs and get on with the job of formulating positive policies' (*Financial Times*, November 18). Maybe Heath *does* learn!

Opinion Poll

The anxiety of Labour's right-wingers and the Tories is understandable if public opinion polls are to be credited. For a recent analysis published in *New Society* of what a sample 100 Labour MPs are reading inevitably strikes alarm in the minds of Margaret Thatcher, Mary Whitehouse, Sir Harold Wilson and James Callaghan. The main trend during this century has been clearly

away from the *Bible* and towards Karl Marx. By 1962, already, the atheist Bernard Shaw headed the list, followed by Wells, Cole, Marx, Tawney, Blatchford, Morris and Laski in that order. The 1975 list, just published, is headed by Marx, followed by Tawney, Shaw, Bevan, Wells, Crosland, Galbraith and Laski. It is alleged that further checking has generally confirmed the latest list. The *Bible* now 'rates only four mentions' (*Times*, December 2).

The Tory right-wing Labour offensive against Marxist influence has naturally penetrated our mass media. On November 19, the *Financial Times* published a feature on 'The realities of reds-under-the-bed' which recognised that 'the spectrum of Labour' had always included 'a handful of out and out Marxists, a rather larger group of rather woolly minded eclectics who could be called *marxisants*, and a still larger group of more or less radical, native-grown socialists in the tradition of Owen, or Morris, or the Chartists or the pacifists or any number of other and lesser breeds.' David Watt, the writer, 'feels the situation needs careful watching' but 'cannot justify hysteria. The Conservative Party, by its outburst, shows either the high degree of cynicism that Mr Heath evidently diagnoses or else, as I suspect, a deeper malaise.'

This was followed on December 1 by a feature in the *Times* calling for a stop to be put to 'the creeping Marxism in the Labour Party'. The article was by Douglas Eden, a Greater London Council Labour member, who urged Mr Callaghan 'to call on Mr Jones and his colleagues for support.' If this were to fail, he suggested, 'anti-Marxists in the Labour Party must consider whether they can still hope to defeat the extreme left from inside the party.'

Here we have an open hint that right-wing extremists might find Labour Party membership no longer congenial. Douglas Eden is a clear case where a candidature should not be renewed by socialists.

International Links

The fact that Wilson and Callaghan should join in the anti-left crusade just when the mission of the IMF is still making up its mind seems to be no accident. For just at this juncture the opportunity is seized to demand the deportation of two US journalists, Agee and Hosenball, without any adequate reason being given. 'A bad day for justice' was the *Sunday Times* comment (November 21). It is well known, and he is not keeping quiet about it, that Agee is an outspoken critic of the CIA. And about the same time, too, a US tycoon has acquired the *Observer* newspaper. Even the *Economist* raised an eyebrow at this with the question (November 27): 'Is an

American-controlled multinational company in the oil business the proper owner of 90 per cent of a left-ward-leaning [sic] British newspaper?'

In this situation it is no wonder that the arch-reactionary American economist, Professor Milton Friedman, should be shooting his mouth off with a maximum of publicity in our press and TV on the dire fate facing Britain if it does not back down from all the social advances achieved since the second world war.

In the US itself, the new president, Carter, has just retreated from price control on the ground that companies were raising prices in anticipation; and he has appointed Cyrus Vance to take over from Dr Kissinger as Secretary of State. The *Times* (December 4) describes this character as a 'Vietnam hawk' and reminds readers that, internally, he recommended that paratroopers be used against 'rioters' in Detroit in July 1967, 'a desperately dangerous move politically'. In view of such an indication of 'change' in US foreign policy we cannot be surprised to find that the US still stubbornly resists Vietnam's admission to the United Nations.

In the anti-Vietnamese atmosphere that is still being fostered in Thailand, where a bloody right-wing *coup* took place last October, a story has emerged which, for fraudulent nonsense, equals the 'nationalisation of women' rumour circulated about the early days of the Soviet Republic. The following is from the *Economist* of November 2:

> . . . hundreds of frantic men in three of Thailand's north-eastern provinces rushed to local hospitals this week with complaints that their sexual organs were disappearing. It was, said the Thai press, the latest dastardly Vietnamese plot to deaden the sexual desire of Thai males and make way for the region's large Vietnamese community to infiltrate Thai womanhood. However, medical tests have shown that the allegedly offending noodle soup is, after all, harmless.

This is a diversion, but it all goes to show that the atmosphere of witch-hunts and slander is international.

The IMF Visitors

According to Denis Healey on November 30, all is simple and harmonious: 'the government will decide. . . . The IMF will then decide whether the government has decided wisely' (*Financial Times*, December 1). But from rumblings in the press it is clear that the government is not finding the process of decision easy. And from the other side of the Atlantic, almost coinciding with Healey's statement to the House of Commons the *Wall Street Journal* was

singing a very different tune (*Daily Telegraph*, December 1):

> Mr Callaghan should 'give the boot' to the team from the International Monetary Fund. . . . America's most influential financial newspaper, the *Wall Street Journal*, said yesterday. Commenting that 'the last thing Britain needs is more austerity', the journal said Britain had every reason to worry that the IMF would impose terms so Draconian that they would lead to rejection by the public and an economic crisis.

'The newspaper joined with the faction in the cabinet which is urging rejection of the IMF's terms' but made other suggestions which 'might prove even less acceptable to the Labour Party', including the cutting of the top rates of income tax.

Whichever way we look at it, both the IMF according to all sources, and its big business critics such as the *Wall Street Journal*, are out to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. And yet it is being rumoured that the 'big unions are prepared to go along with a third year of pay restraint after all' (*Sunday Times*, December 5).

Ian Mikardo MP reminded *Labour Weekly* readers on December 3: 'the anti-Labour parties in 1931 were saying exactly the same things as they are saying in 1976: (1) put the burden on the unemployed, not on the taxpayers; (2) increase the cuts which are to be borne by the poorest people and (3) whatever else is cut, military expenditure must be inviolable. . . . The Bank of England continued to press for financial orthodoxy. . . . "It could not be too clearly recognised that foreign lenders regarded the heavy financial burdens on industry of the Unemployment Insurance scheme as impairing the security for their loans" [Mikardo is here quoting the Prime Minister at a cabinet meeting on August 22, 1931]. . . . Ye gods, do we *never* learn?'

We are still up against the same 'fabulous power . . . of these bandits' as Marx and Engels pointed out in 1894. And right-wing Labour is again falling for it, as they did in 1931.

Rates of Interest

In April 1955 the late Maurice Dobb contributed an article entitled 'Four-and-a-Half Per Cent', the then bank rate. A letter this month asks us to comment on what has happened since as we are now in the realm of a 15 per cent bank rate (or 'minimum lending rate' as it is now called). Yet nobody screams against the bankers 'holding the nation up to ransome'.

As Maurice Dobb pointed out in that article, until 1931 the pound had been convertible into gold and the anchoring of the unit of money to what Marx in his day called the 'money commodity' gave it a value which bore an indirect relation to the labour cost of this

commodity. The growth of monopoly in the gold producing industry makes the price of gold today much less a reflection of labour cost than it was then, but the world's credit systems have now moved in many cases far beyond a direct link with the value of gold. The 'gold standard' gave way to the 'gold exchange standard' under which countries kept reserves of foreign currencies in place of gold to a growing extent, and this worked so long as those currencies, 'reserve currencies', still bore some relation to gold. But during the Vietnam war the US issued paper dollars and dollar credits far beyond the possibility of redeeming them in gold and the 'reserve currency' *par excellence*, the 'almighty' dollar, lost its gold anchor. From then onwards many currencies have 'floated' and fallen in value all over the capitalist world. The 'value of money' has ceased to mean anything, and now 'inflation accounting' has become recognised as a new 'system' to meet the needs of capitalist business. Only the socialist rouble now remains firmly anchored to gold!

Notice that a charade is still being played: as if interest rates still controlled the value of money. In fact, nothing of the kind is happening. Moreover, interest rates have been raised—with disastrous effects on costs, mortgages, and every kind of building. How often the workers are blamed for rising costs, but why does nobody ever mention rising interest rates? The banks alone profit from this and nobody can blame the cost of 'money' as being due to a strike of bank clerks!

In the present monopoly-state-finance capitalist set-up there is no longer the traditional factor of competition always tending to keep prices down. Nowadays the prevalence of national and multinational monopolies everywhere is a constant cause of prices being forced up. To monopolies as a whole it pays to charge as much as possible, claiming as 'costs' even capital outlays that in the competitive days were financed by shareholders. Now these are subscribed out of monopoly profits, and are called 'investment costs', and Denis Healey has decreed that the 'cost' of such investment is to be borne in part by consumers in yet higher prices! In this way the government and the monopolies are hand-in-glove, and the supermultinational of the lot, the IMF, is at this moment making up its mind whether or not to accept the 'solution' which the government is (we are told) 'freely' about to submit.

The interest rate of 15 per cent must be regarded as a state-monopoly-determined price like any other. Any effective price control would have to restrict interest rates. But this would be flying in the face of the dictates of monopoly capitalism. The present crisis

includes interest rates of 15 per cent; the monopoly bankers nowadays have to have their cut. But basically . . . their 'solution' is the same as before: make the workers pay.

The Remedy

Again and again we must repeat: there *is* a remedy. But this remedy depends on taking the bull by the horns and making a stand against monopoly capitalism: the wealth tax, part of Labour's electoral programme, was part of such a stand and has been thrown overboard, now to be revived in a 'working party' as a 'sop to union opinion' (*Times*, December 7). Investment abroad should be stopped. Overseas investments in private hands should be taken over (as Churchill did in wartime) to meet our obligations. Arms expenditure should be cut, instead of being raised to satisfy the folk memory of the days when Britain ruled an empire on which the sun never set. Multinational corporations on British soil should be made to work for Britain or get out. If they close down their factories (for example, Courtaulds) the government should take them over and operate them. As Kwame Nkrumah wrote when President of Ghana, multinationals can be allowed to invest, but 'in accordance with a national plan drawn up by the government . . . with its own interests in mind' (*Neo-Colonialism*, p x).

Nationalisation should be extended but with increased democracy in its administration. The government could then invest as, and where, it was necessary. To suggest, as Callaghan does, that greater profits will be reflected in greater home investments, does not hold water. Businessmen will 'freely' invest where private enterprise is least threatened and where the workers are the worst organised. They will invest abroad so long as they are allowed to. For investments to be in the interests of the country, the state itself must do the investing.

According to the *Economist* (November 27) the sterling deposits in September last year included £35.5 billion in the banks and almost £25 billion in the building societies. Taken together with savings banks, finance houses, local authorities and some smaller institutions, the grand total amounted to some £71 billion. The reason for the demand for nationalisation of these institutions is not, as the Tories never stop saying, out of 'doctrinaire jealousy of those that have', but the need to control these vast resources in a planned way in the national interest. In charge of these funds at present, as Marx and Engels pointed out long ago, is a gang which 'knows nothing about production and has nothing to do with it.'

Selective Imports

A word of caution should be uttered here concerning one of the proposals which the left has been urging. This is the selective control of imports. There are ominous signs that this demand, sound as it is if applied reasonably, has recently been given a distinctly anti-socialist slant. In March last year the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers issued a memorandum calling for import controls, but pin-pointing, as the only serious threat: 'Cheap foreign suits from Eastern Europe. . . . There can be little doubt that . . . these imported suits are almost certainly being dumped on the UK market.'

A check-up among the socialist countries shows that the position is by no means clear-cut, since under GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) prices must conform to 'a fair market price', and considerable subjective judgements are involved in arriving at this. The Czechoslovaks have had five cases alleged against them last year, and in no case were the British authorities able to prove dumping. Other countries are still negotiating on various allegations.

A member of another union has suggested that the Eastern European countries could well, with advantage to themselves, charge somewhat higher prices. Moreover, allegations of 'dumping' lead to endless discussion and not necessarily any concrete result. Much more useful, he suggested, would be a revision of existing trade agreements with clear quotas laid down in all fields where British production was being threatened.

The London Chamber of Commerce on October 18 issued a press statement defending trade with the socialist countries and pointing out that with all of them in Europe, apart from the USSR, we have a positive trade balance. Clothing, the memorandum pointed out, accounts for only 2.7 per cent of the total. Far more menacing to the British economy is the closing down by multinationals of factories on British soil and then producing the same goods abroad and importing them into Britain. This is surely what should be the main target of attack. Planned trade with the socialist countries, with quotas worked out in accord with the needs of British industry, is both possible and desirable.

Socialist Harvest

After Andrew Rothstein's contribution on 'Socialist Harvest' (*LM*, November 1976) it is good to be able now to report that more than 200 million tonnes of grain had been collected in the USSR by November 1, as against the record harvest of 222.5 tonnes in 1973.

This follows the 'catastrophic harvest' of 1975, that all the capitalist media wrote about. That we too can have catastrophic harvests was admitted by the *Daily Telegraph* of November 10 when it reported that

> last season's potato shortage cost the country an extra £125 million—£150 million in foreign exchange to import more than 1,000,000 tons to fill the supply gap. . . . The figure could be even larger this season, a board spokesman said yesterday.

A few days later the *Financial Times* (October 25) admitted that

> the Soviet Union is rebounding from last year's agriculture disaster and is heading towards one of the largest grain harvests in its history.

In the *Sunday Times* (November 19) John Miller, just back from Moscow, pays a highly complimentary tribute to Leonid Brezhnev:

> This year's bumper harvest after last year's disaster has consolidated Mr Brezhnev's personal position. . . . After all, to every Russian peasant the old adage remains true: one good harvest makes up for 10 years of adversity.

But it has not been ten years of adversity. In twelve years, says Miller, Mr Brezhnev has 'done more good for more Russians than any of his predecessors.' Russia 'is certainly better educated, clothed, housed and fed . . . and there is only minimal inflation.'

> In foreign affairs, too, he can lay a claim to miracle-working of sorts. Under his stewardship the Soviet Union has achieved strategic parity with the United States . . . [and] he can boast, as he often does, that the 'correlation of world forces' is now tilted in the direction of the Soviet camp, while the West is wracked by economic difficulties and uncertainty.

Have the Winds Changed?

In our June issue we welcomed the 'winds of change' speech of Dr Kissinger in Lusaka, but warned that 'all forms of imperialist domination' must be ended 'if the new winds of change in Africa are to become really effective.' There followed the euphoria about Kissinger's visit to Rhodesia; the Geneva talks were launched; they have gone on and on; and, as the *Daily Telegraph* correctly stated on December 4:

> All the main black African representatives . . . demand an active British participation in what they call the 'decolonising' of Rhodesia. The Rhodesian government delegation has been, at best, non-committal.

The *Sunday Times* on November 21 released information concerning 'two confidential documents', circulating at the United Nations, which revealed 'how the United States, acting with South Africa,

plans to tie Namibia . . . into the Western sphere of influence after it gains independence. . . . The documents also warn that the plan will inevitably lead to bloodshed.' The documents, says the newpaper, are openly directed against the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), 'currently fighting a guerrilla war against South African forces in Namibia' and 'recognised by the UN as the "legitimate representative of the Namibian people".'

The implicit warning that the US and South Africa are preparing another Vietnam should not be ignored. When speaking in Salisbury on November 19 Mr Smith confidently predicted that 'if the Anglo-American settlement plan failed through no fault of the whites, the Rhodesian government could expect tangible assistance, including military supplies, from the West' (*Times*, November 20).

We have been warned, about Namibia and Rhodesia.

Pat Sloan

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LABOUR MONTHLY FIFTY YEARS AGO

Capitalist reorganisation, because it cannot touch any of the real evils, which are protected by the magic halo of property, can only be carried through at the cost of the workers, and even then leads only to sharper crises. This economic process cannot be affected by any Labour government unless that Labour government is prepared to attack and cut into property rights (not 'reorganise' with compensation, which only resolves itself into a form of capitalist reorganisation); and this is just what the reformists are not prepared to do. Consequently this process is bound to continue and lead to intensified struggle, whatever the results of the next election, which itself can only be a phase in the development of the total struggle and not an alternative.

(From 'Notes of the Month' by RPD, *Labour Monthly*, January 1927)

TRANSPORT AND BRITISH RAIL

Ron Atkins MP

THE transport problem of the modern world is over-crowded roads and under-used public transport services. Railways, in particular, suffer from under-use because unless they are used to high capacity their costs per unit carried are high on account of their high overheads. It would make sense, therefore, to use British Rail to capacity, and profitably. Even the Tories saw the sense of this—after a U-turn in transport policy in 1973—and stated in their February 1974 Election Manifesto:

> Continued growth of traffic has brought with it problems as well as advantages; and has in particular made necessary an increasing reliance on public transport. We have recently announced a massive five-year programme for the railways to provide a modern network with a secure future and the opportunity to regain freight traffic from the roads.

This was also Labour policy in 1974, and in those halcyon days for public transport policies, and during the debate on Labour's 1974 Railway Bill, the front benches (especially Margaret Thatcher) vied with each other to take credit for the measures it contained. This euphoria was soon dissipated in the deepening economic recession with demands from the Tory benches and press for huge cuts in public expenditure. Tories are again blaming railway losses on socialist inefficiency. In fact, railways throughout the world, whether publicly or privately owned, are in financial difficulty, and those high flyers, West Germany and Japan, for example, subsidise their railways £2,000 million a year and £2,500 million a year respectively. The United States Federal government financially assists the privately owned American railways.

Why do these and other governments need to subsidise their railways? Railway transport, especially bulk transport over great land surface distances, is the most economical form of transport in terms of energy, manpower or use of land and in environmental costs. The Department of the Environment's *Consultation Document* (Vol 2, p 25) points out: 'The resource costs of moving the average tonne of rail freight is considerably less than for road.' In 1974 users paid 0.9p per tonne kilometre for sending freight by rail compared with 8.4p by road. The argument formerly used to explain road transport's special advantages, viz door-to-door delivery, does not apply to lorries which are forever increasing in size and making transhipment to smaller lorries necessary. The Greater London Council is now

planning a number of lorry transhipment depots around London.

The reason for the railways' financial difficulties, in my view, is the different ways in which costs are attributed both as between road users in general and the railways, and between the different groups of road users.

Railways in Britain were built at enormous cost—engineering, land and political costs—met entirely by the railway companies through dividend and interest charges. Roadbuilding from the Middle Ages has been regarded as a social responsibility. A fine network of roads had been built by the beginning of the motor age and could be used by the motor vehicle free of charge. It was estimated conservatively by Professor Hondelink in 1960 that interest charges on the capital value of this pre-motor road network would have been £800 million a year. Today, because of inflation and higher interest charges, a more realistic figure would be £2,000 million which, in strict business terms, should be charged to road users though it would be politically inexpedient to do so. Railways were fully rated and were paying about £10 million a year in rates in 1924, while roads were unrated. The equivalent today of £10 million rates in 1924 would be very much greater indeed, probably nearly £100 million. It is true that railways have been derated, and I am not recommending the rating of roads (200,000 miles of them), but if both roads and railways were rated on rateable values, the competitive advantage accruing to railways would be most considerable.

Other direct costs not attributed to roads include police, signals, administration, parking, accidents and damage to buildings. Policing of the roads amounts to about half the police bill, and the cost of accidents (based on the estimate of accidents in Warwickshire) comes to about £1,000 million a year. Of the indirect costs, the costs of congestion are probably between £1,500 million and £2,000 million a year.

However, even more important in ensuring fair competition between rail and road haulage is how road costs are met by the different classes of road users. The *Transport Consultation Document* of the Department of the Environment accepts the conclusions, based on tests costing $27 million in 1960 of the American Association of State Highway Officials, that 'on a given road, whatever its thickness and structure may be, the damage caused by the application of a given axle load varies appreciably as the fourth power of the weight of that axle.' In other words, 1,000 12-ton lorries damage the road as much as 160,000,000 motor cars. It follows that motor cars, especially those privately run because those commercially run are

assisted by tax remissions, cross-subsidise heavy lorries, i.e. private road users heavily subsidise *commercial* road users. The chief cause of British Rail's problem, therefore, is the heavy subsidy received indirectly by its road competitors from private motorists, ratepayers and taxpayers.

What should the Labour government do to help the railways, the most socially and economically desirable form of transport, to maintain and expand their services? It should make competition fair by charging the costs of the total road network to road users in proportion to the use they make of it. It may not be politically expedient to charge the full costs, but the government should start to move towards a realistic taxation of heavy commercial vehicles on the roads in ways similar to those employed by European countries. Denis Healey in his last budget moved in the wrong direction by increasing the flat rate vehicle duty. It would be better to abolish this duty on private cars, which is the same for a Mini doing 500 miles a year as it is for a Rolls Royce travelling 100,000. For all taxation on private cars to be on petrol consumed would be more equitable and more convenient for the poorer motorist who finds it difficult to raise £40.

On the other hand, the government could assist railways in other ways. Use of public transport is discouraged by generous tax remissions on 'company' cars while rail (and bus) commuters and other travellers get no relief from taxation. Why not? Why should not the government relieve the railways of the financial burden of maintaining level crossings (used for road traffic) and of policing the railways.

The government should invest freely in British Rail to increase productivity and reduce costs. The abandonment of the Channel tunnel was a serious mistake. British Rail suffers disadvantages compared with continental railways because Britain is a small island and really long-distance haulage, in which the railways come into their own, is impossible. The tunnel would have removed this disadvantage.

The government should direct certain traffic to the railway, where that traffic is eminently suitable for rail transport and especially when grants are available for building private sidings. The government should start by directing government departments to use rail and stop the present policy of the Post Office transferring traffic from rail to road. There is special need for docks-bound traffic to be carried by rail, since British docks were built for railways and through truck loads, and suffer so much from road congestion. Container depots should be expanded with grant assistance.

New electrification is badly needed and full advantage should be

made of electronics which are more easily applied to railways than any other form of land transport. Only 19.5 per cent of British railways are electrified compared with 100 per cent in Switzerland, 61.2 per cent in Sweden, 60.4 per cent in the Netherlands, 57.5 per cent in Norway, 50.5 per cent in Luxembourg, 49.4 per cent in Italy, 43.2 per cent in Austria, 33.3 per cent in West Germany, 31.5 per cent in Belgium, 29 per cent in Bulgaria, 26.7 per cent in France, 25.7 per cent in Poland and 20.3 per cent in Czechoslovakia. Much investment is also needed in rolling stock to enable British Rail to increase its share of freight traffic from a miserable 18.6 per cent to the much higher percentages in Europe and elsewhere.

Now, during industrial depression, is the time to invest. To delay is to weaken rail transport further so that it may never recover.

CUTS IN CONSTRUCTION

George Smith
General Secretary
Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians

THE construction industry is suffering one of its worst recessions. The building slump in Britain is approaching crisis proportions and the majority of companies are predicting a further decline in new orders and jobs over the next few months. This is the gloomy conclusion of the latest trade enquiry by the National Federation of Building Trades Employers. Of the 650 companies surveyed, 75 per cent said that they were operating at three-quarters capacity or less. The results show that two-thirds of the companies received even fewer enquiries for new work than in the summer, and 65 per cent of the building companies expected to do less work in 1977 than in 1976. Inevitably job prospects are also grim. Despite unemployment levels of 200,000 and over throughout 1976, 65 per cent of companies expect to employ fewer in 1977.

Since approximately half the construction work-load comes from public spending, public expenditure cuts clearly have a very significant effect on the industry prospects. Traditionally the industry has been used as an economic regulator because of the superficially large savings that cuts in construction can be presented as making, and because the fragmentation of construction activity makes it a politically vulnerable target.

The measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on July 22 are a good illustration of this point. Of the £952 million

cut in public expenditure plans for 1977-78, nearly £300 million relate to construction work, civil engineering bearing the brunt of it. This came about because of the large amount of capital expenditure involved in the cuts. On top of the cuts additional action was announced which affected the house building programme—an immediate freeze on all new tenders and the letting of contracts by local authorities, new towns and housing associations succeeded by controls designed to concentrate house building in high stress areas. During the rest of the 1976-77 financial year, tender approvals were to be limited to an annual rate of only 70,000 a year.

The severity of these cuts has shocked the industry. It is estimated that around 60,000 additional jobs could be lost as a result of the July measures. Since July, representatives from all sections of the industry have been meeting with the government to explain the seriousness of the situation, but the general feeling appears to be that the Treasury at least is not impressed. By publication date of this article, the impact of these representations should have been revealed by the composition of the Chancellor's December budget.

However, even without additional cut-backs there is a real danger that the already announced cuts, the high interest rates and the resulting uncertainty about future demand will cause irreparable damage to the industry. Registered unemployment in the industry has risen from just under 100,000 in the summer of 1974 to around 160,000 in the summer of 1975, and a current level in excess of 200,000. Although reservations can be expressed about the precision of the statistics, both the upward trend and the general level are alarming. Those unemployed represent nearly 15 per cent of the industry's work force and nationally they represent about 16 per cent of the unemployment figure. Of the total unemployed in the construction industry, about a quarter is amongst skilled trades.

Inevitably, therefore, both the skilled and younger, more mobile workers are induced to move elsewhere. As a prolonged cut-back in work-load also has the effect of reducing recruitment and training, the age composition of the work force is quickly becoming unbalanced and future output and efficiency are threatened.

The construction industry is made up predominantly of small and medium sized firms. These exist largely on borrowed capital and therefore are very vulnerable during periods of slump and high interest rates. The number of bankruptcies is alarming; during the first nine months of this year nearly 500 firms connected with the building industry have been made bankrupt, many of them well established concerns. Those firms that have survived are working at

vastly reduced capacity and, therefore, at inefficient levels. Output has fallen dramatically. It is forecast to continue to fall until 1978 and by next year output is expected to be some 20 per cent below that of 1973. Productivity inevitably has suffered. At the end of 1975 productivity per head was 95 per cent of the 1970 level compared with 113 per cent in manufacturing industry.

It is not the purpose of this article to challenge the basis of the Chancellor's policy of public expenditure cuts, therefore it is assumed that the construction industry must bear its fair share of the cuts. But surely the government has singled out the industry unjustly and unwisely. The government's strategy is for economic recovery spearheaded by manufacturing exports. Efficient and adequate road, rail, air and port facilities are a basic requirement to exports. Yet expenditure in all these sectors has been cut. Equally vital to the better performance of British industry is the building of modern factories, and adequate housing, nurseries, schools, to cater for the needs of the work force. A labour force capable of meeting the demands of modern technology cannot be created while a high proportion of the population have to suffer archaic schools, inadequate housing and poor working conditions. Yet the capacity of the construction industry to produce such essentials is being undermined by cut-backs in local government spending, mortgage lending and capital expenditure in education.

Further substantial public expenditure cuts in construction would be disastrous for the industry. If the construction industries are to remain viable and able to respond to future demand, urgent government action is required. A key area for action should be the encouragement of new factory and warehouse building and refurbishing of modern industrial installations. These measures are essential if the government's industrial strategy is to succeed. Home improvements and rehabilitation work should also be encouraged. It has a high labour content and a relatively short initiation period, therefore such a programme would have a double benefit—the improvement of the country's housing stock and less expenditure on social security. Finally, the house building programme, public and private, must not be allowed to fall below current levels. This depends on an even flow of building society finance with greater flexibility on the part of building societies towards prospective borrowers and no further cut-backs in local authority housing-starts.

Without such measures the construction industries will be unable to contribute fully to the objectives of the industrial strategy and the structure of the industry is likely to be irreparably damaged.

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General Secretary: Alan Sapper

PEOPLE OF THE BANTUSTANS

Basil Davidson

WITH a democratic victory in Mozambique and Angola, the rise of a people's army of liberation to free Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), and corresponding pressures in Namibia (South-West Africa), the long deadlock in South Africa itself is now at last broken.

Beginning in May of this year and still very active, mass protests against apartheid misery have brought hundreds of thousands of people into active demonstration in the township slums of the Transvaal and Cape provinces; and not even the fusillades of Vorster's gangster police—always reckless, now more reckless than ever—have been able to master them.

At the same time the leaders of the Western powers, as well as the local bosses of the apartheid system, have understood that they have an effective choice between only two options. One is to try to catch up with events by taking the steam out of anti-apartheid protest through a process of concessions; the other is to do nothing and accept the certainty of a continued radicalisation of African opinion. Everything suggests that they are very afraid of the second, and are not at all sure if they can bring off the first.

Faced with these same choices in Zimbabwe, they have put the screws on the Smith regime, and are now engaged in a complex manoeuvre aimed at undermining Zimbabwe radical nationalism while conserving the basic structures of white-minority control. Happily, the young men in the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) have very well understood the game. In South Africa, however, the situation is not so far advanced, and the ending of white minority control will be much more difficult, prolonged, and no doubt bloody. All the same, while one should have no illusions on the enormous difficulties faced by the majority in South Africa, the elements of basic change, of revolutionary change, are beginning to appear. It is therefore particularly important for us to understand now the South African situation in its tortuous reality.

Professor Houghton's *The South African Economy** is very useful in this respect. Published initially in 1964, it now appears in an up-dated new edition of 1976. Its author is a distinguished liberal academic in South Africa and does not cheat with his statistics. His object has been to provide an introduction and a work of reference;

* *The South African Economy*, D. Hobart Houghton, *OUP*, 310 pp, £5.25

and, within the limits of his point of view, he does this both comprehensively and effectively. The tone, naturally, is bland, and generally adheres to the 'liberal economism' which has always liked to argue that a mere expansion of the apartheid economy will lead to its dissolution into some kind of 'parliamentary capitalism' within which colour bars and such will disappear. Given the evidence, this argument has long become extremely difficult to sustain by any honest man; and Professor Houghton is certainly an honest man. This is what leads him now and then into statements that do no credit to his own intelligence while appearing to suggest that his readers must be fools.

We are told on page 39, for instance, that 'anti-colonialist writings' have sometimes suggested that 'foreign investment in extractive industries for export is of little benefit to a country, and is merely exploitation by foreigners. This has not been the case in South Africa.' You see how he evades the issue of deepening non-white impoverishment (well evidenced in his statistical tables and, indeed, even referred to in his text): he speaks of 'benefit to a country' when what he really means, and cannot not mean, is 'benefit to a given community', in this case—but need one say it?—the community of whites. But I don't think that readers of *Labour Monthly* should be too put off by this kind of evasion, if only because it is transparent.

Against the background of Houghton's factual evidence, for example, one can better measure the reality of Vorster's latest parlour trick, the trumpeted 'independence' of the Transkei (duly announced and embellished with expensive adverts in the *Times*). The Transkei is one of a number of 'Bantu homelands' billed for 'independence'. Ten years ago or less, true enough, the bosses of apartheid never presented these 'homelands' as having the least chance of independence. They were to have a form of domestic autonomy closely controlled by Pretoria. This is what the Transkei has got (and others will soon get). But Vorster and Co are now eager for cosmetic beauty, and so they have tarted up their sorry invention with a great deal of floral verbiage. The reality is not changed.

What is this reality? In 1913 the by then independent government of South Africa divided the whole country into two major zones. In one of these the whites were given all rights to residence and property ownership and the rest; in the other, the African zone (called the native reserves), Africans were able to own land and other property (if they could get any) and be immune to many of the petty horrors of racist discrimination. The first zone covered about 90 per cent of the whole country; the second zone had the

balance. Since then some trifling addition has been made to the amount of land in the African zone, and today it stands at somewhere between 13 and 15 per cent of South Africa, though with a vastly greater (and vastly poorer) African population than it had in 1913.

Scattered around South Africa, these 'native reserves' became, and have remained, the 'base reservoirs' of cheap African labour for the dominant white zones. Overcrowded, over-stocked, suffering terrible erosion, endowed with no modern means of communication, absolutely without industry, bereft of the most slender means of economic or financial self-support, they are now being 'transformed' into 'independent African homelands', or, in common parlance, Bantustans. The change is no more than nominal, save in one respect. This is the deliberate advancement by Pretoria of a band of picked nominees and stooges who, it is hoped, will be able to 'capture' African nationalism and so destroy it by the back door.*

In this perspective—and it is one we have to be aware of—the intention is to give the long history of labour exploitation a new chance of life in the future. The stooges will be allowed—they will even be expected—to make loud noises about liberty and progress. There will be great 'disputes' between Pretoria and the 'capitals' of the Bantustans. There will be a fine old carry-on about the way in which this or that Bantustan president or prime minister is 'turning into a fire-eating nationalist.' Do not let us be taken in; the men who are figureheads in the Transkei and other 'homelands' are in reality bound hand and foot to Pretoria, and will be ousted the very moment that they say or do anything genuinely independent.

Which is not to say that the dialectics of this history may not work in such a way as to use the Bantustans for the processes of emancipation. The masses who live there have often shown that they at least have no illusions about their position. Their gradual (and perhaps not so gradual) linkage with urban protest and organisation is in the dynamics of these years. Opposition spokesmen in the Transkei are already in prison, flight or great difficulty. Others will undoubtedly arise. As autonomous states the Bantustans have no future worth the name. But the people who live in them—and they number more than seven millions—have a major part to play in the struggle for a democratic revolution. In assessing that part, Professor Houghton's statistics remain a handy guide.

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* This is well set out in *Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans*, Barbara Rogers, *International Defence & Aid Fund*, 86 pp, 60p.

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PEACE CAMPAIGN NEEDED

Gordon Schaffer

THE proposal last November of the Warsaw Pact countries for a treaty banning the first use of nuclear weapons was either ignored by the media, or, as in the case of the BBC overseas service, dismissed as 'nothing new'. Certainly the policy was not new, as far as the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries were concerned. All of them backed the first Stockholm appeal in 1950 which, besides calling for a ban on nuclear weapons, declared that any nation using nuclear weapons after that date would be a war criminal. But the proposal is of immense importance in the light of the talks on mutual and balanced force reductions now going on in Vienna between Nato and Warsaw Treaty representatives. The hard truth is that the Nato alliance bases its policy on the first use of nuclear weapons, and the decision to use them can be taken without the unanimous agreement of all the members of the alliance.

It is easy to see how this fact must overshadow the Vienna talks. It is officially admitted that some 7,000 so-called 'battlefield' nuclear weapons are spread across Western Europe, including Britain. Each has the power of the Hiroshima bomb from which survivors are still suffering to this day. So we have the absurd situation that while the European powers have accepted the duty to implement the wide measures of co-operation pledged at Helsinki and to match these agreements with disarmament, while they even exchange observers at each other's manoeuvres, they all know they are living under the shadow of the bomb.

Ministers who have been asked by a number of deputations why the Vienna talks have made so little progress, repeat the same story. They claim that the conventional forces on the Warsaw side are superior to those of Nato and that these must be scaled down to equilibrium before balanced reductions can be made. For this reason they reject the Warsaw proposal for a percentage reduction by both sides of all forces. The West offered to cut their 'battlefield' nuclear weapons by 1,000, but, since that would still leave enough to destroy the continent a dozen times over, it was not taken seriously.

When Mr Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, visited Britain early in 1976, he explained in detail to a group of Conservative MPs including Winston Churchill, now Shadow Defence Minister, that the Soviet Union has not increased armaments, and he pointed out the incorrect data on which Nato based its claim that the Warsaw forces were superior.

Few people realise the deadly menace that hangs over their continent, so it is useful to recall how the policy was decided and how the news leaked. The *Times* in December 1969 gave a detailed report of how the Nato planning group adopted proposals drawn up by Denis Healey, then Defence Minister, and his counterpart in the West German government, Franz Josef Strauss. This report described how 'guidelines' for the first use of nuclear weapons had been agreed. This was to be governed by 'flexible response'. This entailed first firing the 'battlefield' nuclear bombs at the East European countries but not the Soviet Union. This was to provide a 'temporary respite' to demonstrate to the Soviet Union the intention to go on to the use of larger weapons. The *Times* added that if the Soviet Union retaliated with its own nuclear weapons, this would end in targets being hit on the US mainland as well.

The plan provided for contingencies to be discussed by the Nato allies, but the final decision 'in the heat of battle' was to be taken by the countries directly involved and by the men on the spot. This is not the script of a horror film but a serious policy set out by men who take it upon themselves to decide the fate of mankind.

It is still the policy. The Women's Committee of Peace Groups has launched a petition calling on all nations to give a pledge never to be the first to use the bomb and gathered support from nearly 100 MPs and a number of trade union and religious leaders, as well as from Dr Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the UN. But when they wrote to Sir Harold Wilson reminding him that when he signed the Helsinki Final Act he gave a pledge, in our name, to press forward with disarmament, and asking him to support their petition, he replied that while nuclear free zones were acceptable in certain areas, Nato policy was based on 'flexible response'.

Before this policy was adopted, British leaders, including Anthony Eden and Hugh Gaitskell, had supported the plan put forward by Poland for a nuclear free zone in central Europe, which could be a vital first step. Now that is abandoned. When the first-use policy was leaked, Lord Mountbatten wrote to the *Times* (February 23, 1970):

> During my six years on the Nato Military Committee, I never missed an opportunity of saying loud and clear that the actual use of tactical nuclear weapons could only end in escalation to total nuclear destruction and that, for that reason, no one in their senses would contemplate their use.

Lord Wigg wrote at the same time that he had resigned from the government when he failed to persuade his colleagues of the 'dan-

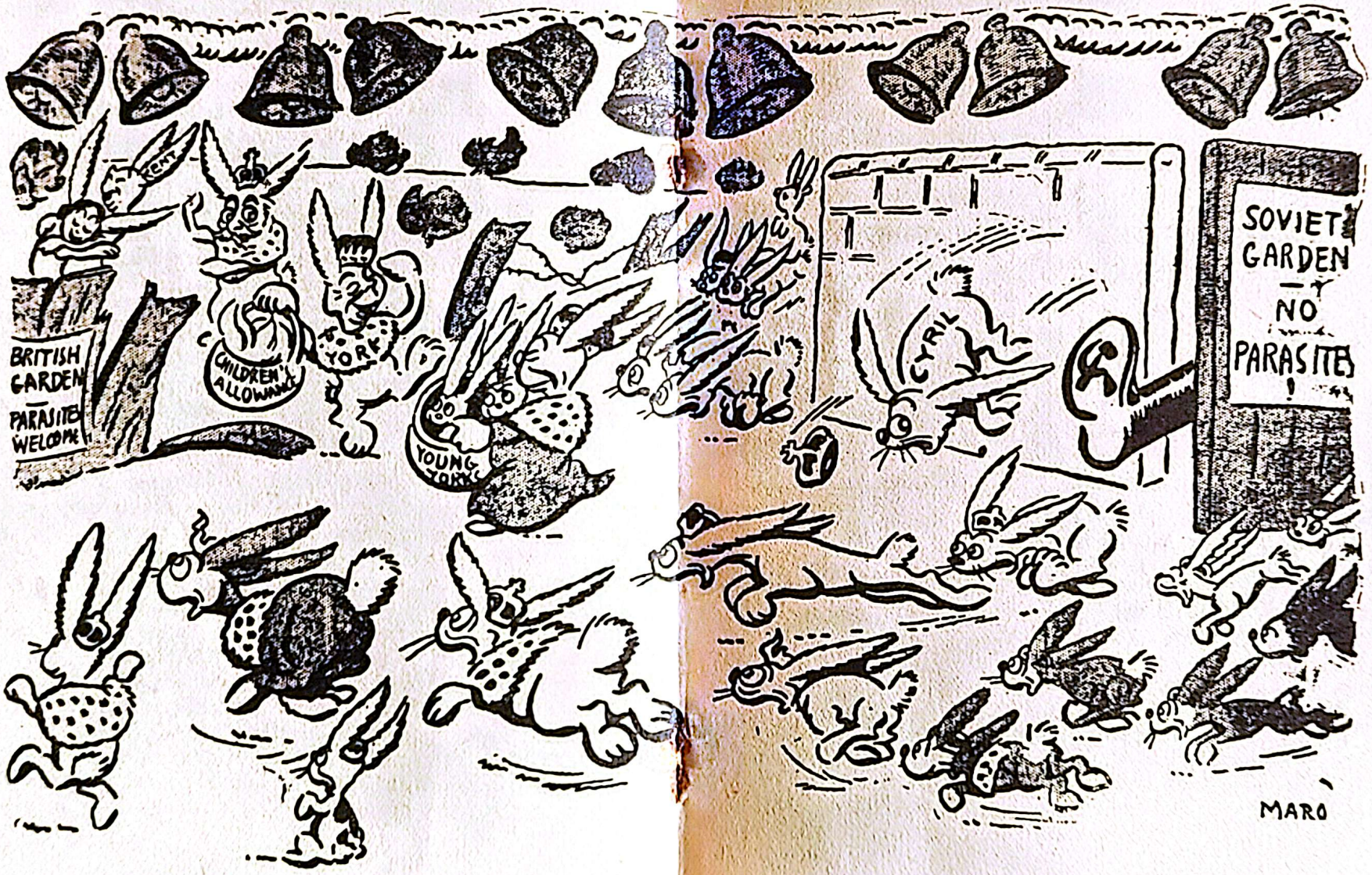
gerous nonsense' of this policy. Since then, similar warnings have come from the Pugwash scientists and from many others. But the policy remains, and its reality is sedulously concealed from the mass of the people.

Equally, the long list of disarmament proposals put forward by the Soviet Union and, in most cases, overwhelmingly backed by the UN General Assembly are ignored. Press and television and some 'leftist' circles, as well, put the US and USSR on a par on disarmament questions. The reality is—and all the evidence is there to prove it—that the Soviet Union is ready to go to any limit in reducing forces and arms expenditure, provided it is reciprocal. Brezhnev said at the meeting of the CPSU Central Committee in November 1976: 'We are prepared even tomorrow to start disarmament measures, either big and radical, or for a start, only partial, on a truly fair reciprocal basis.' And he added a statement which applies even more to our country: 'We have no greater desire than to switch the assets, of necessity today diverted from the national economy, towards raising living standards and creative purposes.'

The monumental folly of our government's policy of cutting health, education and other social services, jeopardising the whole future of our country, while spending billions on armaments trained against an 'enemy' which repeatedly presses for an end to the arms race, must be made clear to our people. They must also be alerted to the even greater menance of the Thatcher leadership waiting for the opportunity to make further cuts in living standards and actually committing itself to increased arms expenditure.

The next few months will be critical. If no progress towards disarmament can be reported when the signatories of the Helsinki Final Act meet at Belgrade in June, the brave hopes aroused by the agreements signed by 35 nations will be dimmed. A continent cannot reap the benefit of the plans for co-operation in science, trade, culture and a host of other creative activities, if one side refuses to renounce the threat to destroy the lot. Moreover, orders are now being given for new and more deadly weapons to come into service in the 1980s, and once that programme goes ahead it will be much more difficult to call a halt.

There is a gleam of hope in statements by Jimmie Carter of his determination to tackle the nuclear menace. If he can be kept to that purpose it could be decisive. The American people, whose government also signed the Final Act, have not yet been alerted to its importance and to the understanding that their towns and cities are equally menaced.



Joy-Day in the Royal Rabbit-warren

At the start of a royal Jubilee year, we reproduce a famous *Daily Worker* cartoon, of November 29, 1934, 'Joy-day' marked the wedding of George, Duke of Kent, to Princess Marina, daughter of a Greek prince. Our thanks to the *Morning Star* for their copy of Maro's original.

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AFTER THE ELECTION IN SWEDEN

Urban Karlsson

FOR many foreign observers the result of the Swedish election was a surprise. The Swedish social democrats were defeated and a social democratic government, which had ruled for 44 years, was replaced by an openly bourgeois one.

During that period Swedish working people had won many important social reforms and a living standard which is comparatively high. But it must be noted that the social reforms in Sweden have not in any way changed the capitalist character of society. On the contrary, during the social democratic government, the big monopolies strengthened their position. In increasing ways the state supports the big companies by low taxes and various subsidies. This has led to a strong concentration where the 25 biggest economic groups today employ 37 per cent of the working people. Ten years ago the figure was only 28 per cent. It has been characteristic of social democratic policy to favour this development which is quite contrary to any development in a socialist direction.

So-called 'Swedish socialism' has never existed. When the social democratic leaders in our country were attacked by the bourgeoisie for being socialists they tried in every way to deny any concept of this type. This was done regardless of the opinions of many social democrats. Especially among the trade union members there is an increasing demand for a more radical policy; they also expressed this in demands for solutions in a socialist direction. But the Swedish social democrats were not prepared to respond. Ideologically they had for years attacked basic socialist ideas, removing them from the party programme, and, above all, in political practice, trying in every way to strengthen big business. They then attempted to distribute the results to the benefit of the working people.

These policies made it difficult for the Swedish people to see any difference between the bourgeois parties and the social democrats. The social democrats for years have avoided developing studies in Marxism, and so the ideological level is low.

During the last three elections the social democrats lost in influence. In 1970 they had 45.3 per cent, in 1973 43.6 per cent, and in 1976 42.8 per cent of the votes. The Communist Party had, during the same period, 4.8 per cent, 5.3 per cent and 4.9 per cent. For years there had been a 50-50 situation in Swedish political life and now the

swing was to the disadvantage of the social democrats.

An important role in the social democratic defeat in the 1976 election was played by the following factors. The social democratic leaders have merged with the capitalist leadership at all levels. In the service of big business they launched a programme for energy based on nuclear power more advanced and risky than in most countries. They showed a lack of ability to meet the new demands especially from young people and women. There was no social democratic answer to the demand for structural changes inside society.

The new conservative government has, of course, no such answer either. They now face the problems of the capitalist crisis which, even under Swedish conditions, are deep-going and grave. Their conception is to let big business dominate even more effectively, and wait for the capitalist boom to solve the problem. But the boom doesn't come. The bourgeois parties are also quarrelling about how to achieve it. They have no unity on the important question of how to solve Swedish energy problems, and in ideological problems they have to try to unite black conservatism with liberal concepts. In foreign policy they occupy different positions, and, as a whole, they demonstrate the weakness of every alternative which fails to strive for a society where the power of monopoly capital is attacked.

So the social democrats can wait for the mistakes of the other side in order to make a come-back, but this will only be temporary if they do not fundamentally change their policy. Up to now there are no signs in the social democratic leadership of such a change. Left Party Communists in this situation are trying to mobilise the workers in the fight for jobs, for better pay and for social reforms, especially in regard to women. It stands as the only alternative for those in our country who find a socialist solution necessary.

The result of the Swedish election demonstrates that even under very favourable conditions the social democratic parties cannot defend and develop their position. In Sweden they used their power in government to develop a policy which placed the Swedish people in a better position than in other capitalist countries. Unemployment was not so high. The development of living standards was more favourable. But they could not meet the demand of the working people for using the rich resources of Sweden to form a society giving security and optimism for the future. So 'Swedish socialism' has once again been demonstrated to be an empty phrase. Sweden is the same as before—a country where the real power is in the hands of a few strong companies.

THE THIRD YEAR OF THE CRISIS

Y. Kapelinsky and N. Sergeyev

(*In September* 1975 *we published an abridged economic review by Soviet economists Y. Kapelinsky and S. Safronov. We now publish an abridged review by Y. Kapelinsky and N. Sergeyev, from the* Moscow Economic Gazette, No 45, *reprinted by APN on November* 5, 1976—Ed. *LM.*)

IN conformity with the majority of forecasts made by Western experts in 1975, the economy of the industrial capitalist countries should have experienced a boom after the crisis which broke out late in 1973. However, the recovery of the capitalist economy from the crisis, which began at the end of 1975, has been drastically decelerated. Preliminary results for the first three-quarters of 1976 show that a 'revival growing over into a boom' has not taken place.

The current crisis of the bourgeois economy, the longest one since the crisis of the early 1930s, has continued for almost three years now. In the United States the administration again steps up the use of 'anti-crisis' measures, including the extension of new tax privileges to the monopolies. In Britain, France and Italy the governments discuss, or have already adopted, new emergency programmes for recovery from the crisis, a component of which is 'economy at the expense of working people', including wage freezes.

A drastic increase in military spending has also failed to stimulate capitalist production. According to official statistics, the military expenditures of the Nato countries in 1975 exceeded 149,000 million dollars, at current prices, as against 105,000 million dollars in 1971. Adjusting for inflation, this represents an unprecedentedly high increase in military spending in times of peace. Huge military budgets further undermine effective demand and aggravate the general economic difficulties of capitalism.

The growth of production late in 1975 and early in 1976 was largely stimulated by artificial measures. It was based on the growth of state expenditures and the increasing external economic expansion of some Western countries. It was not accompanied by a noticeable revival of the investment activity of private companies, which is the decisive factor for a turn to revival and boom. According to the data of the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the greatest fall in the quarterly indicators of the gross national products during the crisis was 4.3 per cent of the whole, and the corresponding figure for

industrial production was 11.6 per cent. Despite an increase in these indicators in the first half of 1976, by the close of the third quarter neither of them had reached the pre-crisis peak.

If we turn from synthetic indices to sectoral ones, we shall see a nearly analogous picture. The official index of industrial production increased in the US in January-April by 4 points and in May-August by only 1 point. In Japan industry has been marking time for the past five months. In France industrial production has not grown since the beginning of 1976. In Britain industrial production increased by 1 per cent in April-June and returned to the beginning-of-the-year level in July-September. The difference in industrial indices for the pre-crisis and current periods is 20 per cent in France, more than 10 per cent in Britain and 9 per cent in Japan.

The stagnation of the capitalist economy is confirmed by the state of affairs in its leading sectors such as metals and machinery. In the first half of 1976, far from increasing against the extremely low level of 1975, steel making in the industrial Western countries went down further. At the end of the third quarter another great recession afflicted the iron and steel industry. The increase in the output of machinery in the United States in the first half of 1976 was 50 per cent below the industrial average. In Japan great difficulties are still experienced by shipbuilding, machine-tool building and chemical industry engineering. In the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) despite an increase, the output of machinery and equipment is still below the pre-crisis level. Britain and Italy registered in the first half of 1976 a further fall in the output of some sectors of general machine-building and electrical engineering. By the close of the third quarter, 20-28 per cent of capacity did not operate in the US, 15-20 per cent in Japan and about 15 per cent in the FRG.

The present crisis of the capitalist economy is accompanied by high unemployment unprecedented since the crisis of the 1930s. According to OECD data, the biggest number of jobless in the industrialised capitalist countries was registered in October 1975 at 15.2 million. It fell slightly in the first months of 1976 but, as a result of the slow-down in the capitalist economy's upturn, from the middle of the year began to rise, until it stood again at more than 15 million.

The downward trend of unemployment in the US had already stopped in the middle of the second quarter. Then unemployment started a new climb. According to official data, the US level of unemployment rose from 7.3 per cent of the economically active population in May to 7.8 per cent in September; that is almost a

return to the level of the previous year. In Japan there were roughly 15 per cent more jobless at the start of the third quarter than a year earlier. In the FRG about 5 per cent of the workforce are registered as unemployed against 1 per cent in the pre-crisis years. In August, for the first time in the post-war period, unemployment in Britain exceeded 1.5 million, constituting about 7 per cent of the workforce against 4.7 per cent a year earlier.

An exceptionally high level of partial unemployment continues in all the major capitalist countries. Even US right-wing labour leader George Meany, for example, believes that taking into account the partially unemployed as well as those who have despaired of finding work and ceased to register at labour exchanges, the level of unemployment in the US alone jumps from the official 7.8 per cent to 10.5 per cent, or from 7.4 million to 9.2 million people.

Runaway inflation remains one of the most acute problems in the Western economy. All the measures taken in 1975 and the first nine months of 1976, nationally and internationally, have failed to yield tangible results. Although in the opening months of 1976 the rate of inflation in some countries fell slightly, the second quarter saw a rapid new rise of prices which extended to the third quarter. In the EEC countries retail prices in April-June in yearly terms went up 17 per cent against 13 per cent in January-March. In August retail prices in the US were 6, and in Japan 9, per cent higher than a year earlier.

Inflation weighs ever more heavily on the working people. According to the American press, retail food prices in the US over the last five years have increased by 52 per cent, and the costs of house building by 68 per cent. A college training cost 1,783 dollars five years ago and now reaches 2,790 dollars which is, on the admission of American experts, 'beyond the means of many families'. At the start of the third quarter there was an abrupt rise in the prices of major food products, transport and services in Britain, France, the FRG and other capitalist countries.

The beginning of the fourth quarter has been marked by a further aggravation of the West's economic difficulties. The New York stock exchange reacted to this by a sharp fall in share prices: the Dow-Jones index which reflects the rates of shares of the major industrial corporations dropped by 42 points during the first week of October, or by almost 5 per cent. The economic forecasting service of Pennsylvania University Warton School recently suggested that, contrary to official forecasts, in actual fact a decline in the gross national product could occur with the simultaneous acceleration of inflation.

On the other hand, the start of the fourth quarter has featured a sharp intensification of the working people's struggle for their vital interests. The strike movement, which in the first half of 1976 involved 55 million people in the industrially advanced capitalist countries, has been building up in the autumn with a new force. On October 7 some 8 million working people in Italy and 6 million in France held a one-day strike in protest against the emergency anti-crisis plans infringing on the interests of the working population. It was held as a demonstration of the preparedness of the working people to embark upon more determined defence of their vital interests. Mass labour actions took place in the US, Britain, Belgium, Japan and many other countries. The exploitative expansionism of the imperialist monopolies is meeting with an ever more organised rebuff from the working people.

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Scottish Region

The Scottish Regional Committee officers and staff send New Year greetings to all trade unionists

24 Park Circus
Glasgow, G3 6AR

R. MACDONALD
Scottish Secretary

NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS
(SCOTTISH AREA)

5 Hillside Crescent
Edinburgh, EH7 5DZ

The Scottish miners send New Year Greetings to all people struggling for peace and socialism

MICHAEL McGAHEY, *President*
DAVID BOLTON, *Vice-President*
WILLIAM McLEAN, *General Secretary*

The South Wales Area of the National Union of Mineworkers send New Year greetings to all workers

May the labour and trade union movement of this country continue their struggle to establish a socialist society

EMLYN WILLIAMS
President

W. H. THOMAS
Vice-President

GEORGE REES
General Secretary

The **FIRE BRIGADES UNION** *extends fraternal New Year's greetings to trade unionists throughout the world*

Enoch Humphries
President

Terence Parry
General Secretary

NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS
DERBYSHIRE AREA

In extending fraternal and New Year's greetings to all trade unionists, the hope of 12,000 Derbyshire miners in 1977 is that their justifiable claim for early retirement is duly implemented.

The No 2 DIVISIONAL COUNCIL of ASTMS

sends New Year greetings to all TUC associates and colleagues everywhere for international social justice, racial and ethnic tolerance, and peace

LONDON CO-OP POLITICAL COMMITTEE

SENDS GREETINGS TO READERS OF *LABOUR MONTHLY*

CUT ARMS NOT SOCIAL SERVICES

Jim Layzell
Chairman

Alf Lomas
Secretary

ASLEF

extends
New Year greetings
and best wishes
to all readers of
Labour Monthly

Ray Buckton
General Secretary

AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS FOUNDRY SECTION

The Executive Council send New Year Greetings to all trade unionists and socialists, and best wishes for Peace, Progress and Social Justice for all workers in 1977

—

J. BRADSHAW
President

R. GARLAND
General Secretary

NEW YEAR GREETINGS

from
the Editor
and Staff
of

SOVIET WEEKLY

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Alan Bush

FOR two hundred years after the death of Henry Purcell in 1695 until the advent of Edward Elgar in 1895, no English composer had appeared whose status, in the view either of *cognoscenti* or of the general musical public, was in any way comparable to the greatest Austrian, French, German, Italian, Polish or Russian composers of those centuries. (The exception was the German, George Federick Handel, who made his home in London from 1712 till his death in 1759, during which time he composed 38 of his 43 operas, written to Italian texts, as well as all his oratorios written to English texts.)

Elgar with his choral and orchestral works performed the prodigious feat of persuading the musical public that here was an English composer who could compose as well, or nearly as well, as any contemporary foreign composer. From 1900 onwards there developed the school of English composers, headed by Ralph Vaughan Williams and George Butterworth and including Rutland Boughton, Frank Bridge and John Ireland.

The last named were the teachers of Benjamin Britten, whose achievement has been to do for opera, as far as the musical public is concerned, what Elgar did for orchestral and choral music. Britten's five grand operas and three chamber operas have put British opera on the map, not only in Great Britain but in Europe and the United States. In addition his *War Requiem* has enjoyed world-wide appreciation. No English composer of any period has so far enjoyed in his or her lifetime comparable fame and success.

In 1939, when Britten was 26 and as yet comparatively little known, his first introduction to the professional concert world was during a Festival of Music for the People, organised by a group of progressive writers and musicians. The first performance of his cantata, *The Ballad of Heroes*, took place in Queen's Hall, sung by a massed choir from the London Co-operative Movement. The text, in honour of those who fell fighting in the Spanish war, had been written by W. H. Auden and Randall Swingler. A year before this his *Russian Funeral March* had opened a cultural event in the Westminster Theatre, when *The Expedient* by Brecht, with Hans Eisler's music, was first introduced to London.

In 1961, his continued interest in the fight for peace was expressed in the above-mentioned *War Requiem*, and this work has been performed in the United States as well as the Soviet Union and

several of the East European socialist countries. In the 1960s he visited Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev. He later stated in public that the Soviet Union had become his second home.

In this context of travel in both capitalist and socialist countries and of his expressed commitment to the cause of peace, the subject matter of his operas (apart from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) is surprising, even disappointing. Without exception the heroes or heroines are presented as individuals, either facing a hostile society and destroyed by it or oppressed by guilt and self-destroying. Incidents where cruelty or brutality of some kind are featured occur in almost every work, even in his children's opera *The Little Sweep*. The circumstances are presented as inevitable, human nature being what it is. It is true that the social pressures are presented as evil, but good scarcely ever triumphs. Nor is it ever suggested that human affairs could be otherwise.

It is none the less true that there are in the Western world today few musicians of rank who can show an equal record of service to the peace and progress of mankind.

ETHIOPIA

John Gritten

THE most populous city between Cairo and Johannesburg is Addis Ababa, with just over a million citizens. Of these it is estimated there are at least 45,000 without homes. The centre of Ethiopia's metropolis has tall blocks of gleaming white offices, flats and shops, some emblazoned with 'Siemens' or 'Bayer' or other names of West European or American multinationals in neon lights, testifying to the foreign capital investment in this state of 28 millions.

But Ethiopia is one of the ten poorest countries of the world, and as one leaves the centre of the city very soon shoddier buildings appear, as well as a host of nondescript shanty dwellings and boutiques, many with corrugated-iron roofs. Here one may see a woman lying full length on the crowded pavement trying to suckle a baby who, at least until two years ago, would have, like all Ethiopian children, one chance in three of reaching his or her sixth birthday. Or, over there, there may be a cripple with leather knee pads crawling on hands and stumps among the cars, buses, donkeys and goats; or one may pass a beggar with his lips eaten away by leprosy; or another with two holes in the middle of his face where his nose used to be.

This is the legacy of centuries of feudalism and decades of the corrupt, autocratic and utterly inhumane rule of the Emperor Haile Selassie with his foreign capitalist backers and £2,290 million salted away in foreign banks—a legacy inherited by the present Provisional Military Administrative Council, the *Dergue* (Amharic for council).

The *Dergue* has its opponents both on the left and on the right, and in the last two months several prominant supporters of the government have been assassinated. Over 50 people have just been executed for these and other murders and crimes. According to the *Dergue*, the majority of them belonged or were supporters of an outlawed party (EPRP) which maintains it is Marxist-Leninist and that the *Dergue* is just another self-perpetuating, demagogic military junta.

It is not intended here to examine the host of accusations and counter-charges made by and against the *Dergue*, but to take just one aspect of its programme, nationalisation of urban land, since it may interest *Labour Monthly* readers to know how an acute housing problem is being tackled in a third world country which claims to be breaking through the integument of feudalism and preparing for an ultimate transition to socialism.

But first this caveat should be made: the *Dergue*'s opponents may have specific criticisms of how this programme is in fact being carried out. What follows is based solely on information provided personally by the Minister of Public Works and his officials, and on a visit to an urban co-operative and a building site in Addis Ababa.

Prior to July 1975, when all urban land was nationalised, 20 per cent of the total area of Addis Ababa belonged to ten members of the royal family, ten property owners, a dozen businessmen and twenty churches. The privileged few collected an annual income of 2,275,000 Ethiopian dollars, and it is estimated that 90 per cent of city dwellers spent as much as 30 per cent of their income on rent. There was no attempt at town planning, no slum clearance or rebuilding. House prices were exorbitant and thousands were forced to occupy unhealthy waste ground on the outskirts, far from their places of work (if they had any), areas completely neglected by the administration.

Ten months after the revolution which forced Haile Selassie to quit the throne, the nationalisation proclamation precluded anyone from owning more than one dwelling, although the maximum limit of 500 square metres per holding is now admitted to have been overgenerous to the owners of big houses. Only the Ministry of Housing or urban co-operatives were allowed to obtain rent. Pre-proclamation rents were slashed on a sliding scale, the lowest, that is those paid by

the poorest, by as much as 50 per cent. Loans were made available for building at low interest and with no initial deposit required.

But one of the most interesting features of the Ethiopian experiment has been the mass formation of urban co-operatives, or *kebeles*, each consisting of up to 2,500 people. The purpose of the *kebele* was not only to cope with the housing needs of the local community, but also to increase the ordinary people's administrative know-how and civic responsibility.

The *kebele*'s function is to set up, in co-operation with the government, educational, health, marketing, road and other services for the area. It also collects rents of up to 100 E-dollars a month per dwelling, which is its basic source of income. Rents above this figure go to central government.

Each urban co-operative has its own judicial tribunal, composed of three members. In the first year these courts heard and decided upon land or housing disputes only and were not allowed to hear criminal cases, but now they can try petty offences such as drunkenness or non-payment of debts. Maximum penalties that can be given are three months 'inside' or fines of up to 250 E-dollars. Public self-criticism and apologies are also encouraged. As Minister of Public Works, Daniel Taddesse put it:

> Many mistakes and financial losses have been made by the *kebeles*. Money was stolen and many things not done that should have been done. But we look upon the experiment as part of the class struggle during the first year of our revolution and we believe that we could not gain the experience we have done without the mistakes we have made.
>
> After one year's trial the PMAC [the *Dergue*] believed it could delegate responsibility. The aim is for the *kebeles* ultimately to take over the administration of Addis and of our other cities and abolish the distinction between the co-operatives and the municipal administration.

As for the courts, their purpose was to introduce socialist justice which could be administered collectively, he said.

Although anyone who had lived off rent was not allowed, during at least the first year after the proclamation, to elect officials of the *kebele*, or to become a member of the judicial tribunal, or of the executive of the *kebele*, nevertheless the Minister admitted that some landlords had bribed officials of his Ministry. It had not been possible to make a clean sweep of the civil servants whose sympathies were still with the old regime.

'The revolution was made without the aid of an organised political party as in other countries,' he explained. 'There were no cadres to

take over these posts, many of them of a technical nature. We have had to reorganise with a new, young staff committed to the Urban Nationalisation Proclamation.' He concluded:

> We had to take some drastic measures, including the forced retirement of 40 civil servants who felt themselves unable to support the aims of the revolution. New departments were set up and people chosen from the young, military, politically-trained cadres.
>
> One of our problems has been to decide what kind of power should be given to the *kebeles*—how far they should be left to themselves, and how far they should be controlled.
>
> We believe bureaucracy cannot be solved before the people themselves take over regional or city administration. Even then all such problems will not be solved.

LETTERS

Jobs, the Environment and Trade Unions

DAVE ELLIOTT's article on the Environment and Trade Unions (*LM*, November 1976) mentioned the activities of the Green Ban Action Committee in Birmingham over the proposed redevelopment of the central GPO site. Since that was written, the mounting pressure from trade unions has resulted in a meeting being called between officials of the Council, Postal Board officials, a representative of the development agents and delegates from the West Midlands TUC, the Victorian Society and the Green Ban Action Committee.

The general arguments are about the obvious destruction of so much of Birmingham's heritage and about the present over-provision of office space. In the City Centre there are 2 million square feet of unlet office space and 5 million more under construction or planned. The GBAC have argued, in addition, that the proposed development locks up resources (materials, energy, finance and skills) in something quite unnecessary, thus depriving the community of the benefits that could be derived from using these resources on different projects. To drive home these points, the committee had architects (from the New Architecture Movement, who want to see their profession meeting social needs) look over the huge existing Post Office building. They assessed its soundness, and the possibility for conversion into a leisure centre for the city.

Birmingham, although Britain's second city, and anxious to achieve some kind of international status, is way down the Sports Council's league table with regard to indoor sports provision. Apart from facilities at the two universities and at Sutton Coldfield (which is acquired through the local authority reorganisation), Birmingham has no sports centre—and the Sports Council reckons it needs twenty! The spacious sorting offices of the old GPO would provide excellent room for a great range of indoor sports, and other areas are suitable for squash courts and combat sports. The cost would be between £300,000 (for sports facilities) and £800,000 (for conversion of the entire building for all leisure purposes) as opposed to £1½ million (for neighbourhood Sandwell's new

Leisure Centre) and £10 million for the proposed unneeded offices!

In putting forward such proposals the GBAC has met Elliott's call to 'develop challenging alternatives'. If workers are asked to refuse to work on useless office blocks, there must be an alternative proposal for work that would be socially useful.

The rightness of these arguments must be clear to anyone with a social conscience—yet the outcome of the meeting with the City Council was deadlock. The Postal Board refuses to reconsider its plans. The GBAC are therefore preparing to take direct action should work commence.

If readers would like copies of our broadsheet (on our alternative plans) or of our longer information document on the Green Ban movement, these can be obtained (price 5p and 10p with s.a.e.) from 77 School Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 8JQ.

VAL STEVENS
Chairwoman, GBAC

What is Socialism?

WE ARE indebted to Pat Sloan, who raised the question (*LM*, September 1976), and your correspondents Rothstein, Nicholson and Letsky (November), who wrote in opposition, for an interesting discussion on the dictatorship of the proletariat and the meaning of a socialist state.

There are Marxists who mix freely and daily with the people and wish to speak in terms the people will readily understand. They know that the term 'dictatorship' is abhorred by people all over the world and used as an insult. They have also given up quoting extracts from Marx or Lenin to prove their points on all occasions.

Marx and Lenin did not speak by divine intuition; they spoke from experience. They could not write defining the form of a state where the ruling class owned none of the means of production but the working class did not control the organs of the state (police, armed forces, secret police) as they never envisaged what happened in the Soviet Union under the dictatorship of Stalin. Perhaps the best way to describe such a unique situation is an early step to socialism.

There has been a tremendous change in language since the 1870s, and people who tried to talk in the fashion of the time would be laughable today. Modern Marxists, born into a world very different from that of Marx and Lenin, where the workers have much more available to them in the fields of education, culture and sport than those of 100 years ago, would define 'socialism' not merely as an 'immense expansion of democracy for the poor' nor 'socially-owned means of production' but as a means whereby mankind can achieve the highest possible level of culture and humanity.

Just as a socialist-owned labour camp was no more comfortable than a German state-owned one, so socialism must present a much more attractive face to win the support of modern men and women.

HILDE GOEDECKE
London SW18

Fascism

HAD I been consulted about cuts to be made in my review of *Fascism* by Professor Martin Kitchen (*LM*, November 1976), I could not have agreed to the deletion of this sentence: '"Enriched", as Kitchen demands, by the prolonged discussion at the Congress and later in the various parties, the Communists were the leadership of the fight against the fascist states and the fascist parties everywhere.' I wrote this because I thought it necessary to rebut

Kitchen's accusations that the decisions and discussion on the nature of fascism at the seventh Communist International Congress were 'dogmatic', that they needed 'enrichment by dialectical understanding' and failed to appreciate the importance of fascist parties. Not to have replied to this distortion would have meant a denial of the reality of history and a wrong to those many hundreds of Communists who sacrificed liberty and life in the anti-fascist struggle.

HILDA VERNON
London SE18

Youth Unemployment

THE RECESSION hitting every section of economic and social life shatters in particular the prospects of young people. The savage cuts in public expenditure and the massive redundancies in the private sector are depriving young people of training and employment. Further education, vocational training, apprenticeships and, finally, jobs are all sacrificed to the cause of inflation. Youth are victims of a crisis they did not cause.

The purpose of the London Committee against Youth Unemployment is to make the labour movement aware of the situation facing thousands of young people in London and to mobilise support for activity around this question.

In February, Westminster Trades Council is organising a conference on youth unemployment, which we are co-sponsoring together with Brent, Hammersmith and Kensington Trades Councils and other leading London trade union bodies. Further information on the London Committee and the conference can be obtained from: Marion Banks, Secretary of the Steering Committee, 24 Essendine Mansions, London W9.

CONWAY XAVIER
London WC1

Eisenstein

WHEN *Labour Monthly* carried a review of Norman Swallow's *Eisenstein* (December 1976), only the hardback price was stated. There is a paperback edition available, also published by *Allen & Unwin*, and I would be grateful if you could mention this in your next issue. The current paperback price is £2.95.

CHRISTINE KING
Assistant Publicity Manager
George Allen & Unwin

Maurice Dobb

AS I READ your list of Maurice Dobb's articles (*LM*, October 1976) I remembered reading (but alas no longer have) the article 'Four-and-a-Half Per Cent: A Note on the Rise in Bank Rate' (April 1955). Would it be disrespectful of me to suggest that this could well be re-examined today in light of the unprecedented 15 per cent now obtaining?

CHARLIE SWAIN
Secretary
Cardiff Trades Union Council

The Editor replies:

READERS will be glad to know that copies of our April 1955 issue are available from our office, priced 45p, post free. Charlie Swain's suggestion has been taken up, as will be seen in this month's Survey.

Military Expenditure

IT HAS BEEN pointed out that in 'Armaments and Labour's Policy' (*LM*, November 1976) I gave the Japanese percentage of military expenditure as less than 1 per cent of GNP, while Jürgen Kuczynski in the same issue gave the 1975 figure as 1.8 per cent. There can always be differences in sources: *World Military and Social Expenditures 1976*, using 1973 sources, gave 0.88 per cent.

RON HUZZARD

The Fawcett Library

A SPECIAL general meeting of the Fawcett Society on Tuesday evening, November 23, 1976, reversed the decision of the annual general meeting last June by deciding *nem con* not to offer the Society's library to the London School of Economics but instead to place it in the City of London Polytechnic. This means that the Society and the Fawcett Library Trustees are now in agreement on the future of the Fawcett Library and brings to an end the five months' long threat that the Library would be broken up (see *LM*, December 1976). The City of London Polytechnic Library is willing to take the whole Fawcett Library intact at an early date, and make it fully available to all serious students.

W. J. SMITH
A Trustee of the Fawcett Library

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BOOKS

Callaghan: The Road to Number 10
Peter Kellner and Christopher Hitchens
Cassell, 188 pp, £3.95

IN JIM CALLAGHAN'S formative years he is supposed to have been profoundly influenced by Laski's book, *The Grammar of Politics*, and in particular by one statement that 'the essential test of government is the transformation of the processes of coercion into the processes of consent.' Peter Kellner and Christopher Hitchens ask: What does he want the consent for? What will he do with it now he has it?

The book tells us about Callaghan's record, and assumes most of his motives. Is he a wheeler dealer? Is he the leader most MPs wanted? Or the one that fewest of the MPs did not want? And is his speciality and strength merely an expression of restrained militancy?

Originally Jim Callaghan came from the workers. His mother was widowed early and he attended the same humble school in Portsmouth as Ian Mikardo. Yet the writers of this informative and entertaining book invariably come to the conclusion that while he is from the workers he is not of them.

Perhaps it is normal working class insecurity which motivated a lot of his actions. His involvement with Julion Hodge and the Bank of Wales plus the purchase of a farm in Sussex either show a lack of long-term judgement or a blithe disdain for the need to avoid giving doorstep ammunition to Tory party workers.

But there are strengths to Jim Callaghan. There must be or he would not have got to be Prime

Minister. On *In Place of Strife* he did manage to avert the disaster course into which Wilson was leading the Party. It may have been, as the book says, that he held no passionate ideological conviction but 'he knew what was acceptable to the people that count, on the occasions that mattered.' Whatever the events, he read the tea-leaves right.

The book chronicles his early climb to Party and National Executive Committee prominence and his experience as a homespun self-educated Chancellor during the 1968 devaluation. Whether those lessons will have taught him to be highly suspicious now of the Treasury mandarins remains to be seen.

Perhaps, too, having experienced four years in the Common Market and seen the pound decline, he might think back nostalgically to June 23, 1971, when he sent a note to Alan Watkins of the *New Statesman*, saying he had three objectives: one to keep us out of the Market, two to get rid of the Tories, and three to preserve Party unity.

As his record of promotions and dismissals shows, Jim Callaghan is not one to forget the people who let him down or helped him on, and there may be hope for Labour's future if after his experiences as Chancellor, Home Secretary in charge of Ulster, and Foreign Secretary at the time of Cyprus, he has now learned to view civil service advice somewhat warily.

Is crisis an occasion for change? Or is it, as the Labour Party invariably says as the crunch comes, an excuse for postponing change? Kellner and Hitchens ask the question but the answer won't appear until the next book of Callaghan's record *at* Number 10. In the meantime they seem to have little confidence.

JOE ASHTON MP

Moulds of Understanding: A Pattern of Natural Philosophy
Joseph Needham
Allen & Unwin, 320 pp, £7.75

THE ELEVEN ESSAYS here are dated 1927 to 1974 and together they outline the development throughout his life of Dr Needham's thoughts about the universe: his ethics, his philosophic attitudes, his own apprehension of reality, his conclusions about both individual and the collective possibilities and methods of apprehending it and altering society.

Deep matters, simply, coherently and reasonably set out. The 'moulds' are virtually ways to such apprehension: in one essay he calls them 'forms of experience' and lists them as science, religion, philosophy, history and art.

Needham's views have modified during the course of his life. It is fascinating to read these essays in the order of their consecutive dates, to measure one's own conclusions against his and then to note the gap widening here and narrowing there. The considerations on such matters of a man of such attainments, training and activity, biologist, historian, scholar, steeped in Christianity, a participant in the social battle, closely attracted to and conversant with Marxism, reward attention.

Lenin's views (expressed in *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*) on the 'god-building' diversions of some of the early Bolsheviks during the inter-revolutionary period 1905-17 are well known. He saw in these the abandonment of materialism and attributed them to a defeatist pessimism symptomatic of the frustrations of those years.

Needham's approach to 'religion' is distinct from this. He constantly uses in regard to the 'religious' experience the expression 'numinous'—a word with several not quite identical connotations, sometimes implying 'holiness',

at others 'awe', in the latter case implying an experience that does not necessarily assume the agency of the divine or even 'supernatural' but simply a particular natural and material form of objectively verifiable and repeatable sensation.

In a brief notice such as this it is not possible to debate or even summarise Needham's views. In my youth at Cambridge I had a contemporary who read the then modish Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and said afterwards that although he did not understand it he felt that it had done him good. Needham is exceedingly clear and easy to understand. Whatever one's differences from him, it is not necessary to agree 100 per cent with him to recognise that reading and wrestling with his conclusions is an enlightening and useful exercise.

The sympathetic editing by Gary Wersky takes the form of arrangement and copious notes of reference.

IVOR MONTAGU

Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography
Winifred Gérin

Clarendon Press OUP, 318 pp, £5.75

MRS GASKELL and Charlotte Brontë share the great fortune of one of the most scholarly, literary and sympathetic biographers any writer could wish for in Winifred Gérin. She is, of course, well known for her biographies of all four Brontës.

The subject of her latest book is the much more ordinary life of a very good writer, a conscientious social worker, an uneasy friend of Dickens, an endearing mother, and also the first biographer of Charlotte Brontë. And what a labour of love that was: threats of libel actions, book withdrawn, truth suppressed because of Charlotte's husband and father.

Winifred Gérin possesses the greatest virtues of a biographer: scholarship and deep understanding of Mrs Gaskell and the society she lived in. The book reminds me—different heroines, different times, but similar treatment—of Yvonne Kapp's recent biography of Marx's daughter Eleanor.

Gaskell fans will get most joy out of the biography in reading it together with the first complete edition of *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* published in 1966, from which Winifred Gérin copiously quotes.

BRIDGET NICOLSON

Cities: The Public Dimension
W. Harvey Cox

Penguin, 244 pp, 80p

'PARISH COUNCILS—they're for clergymen and graveyards, not revolutionaries,' quoth a comrade of mine in exasperation at my advocacy of their benefits. Yet that there is widespread dissatisfaction with local authorities in the cities, involving feelings of real helplessness at the remoteness from decision-making by citizens, is evident. Morley, where I was born in Yorkshire, has lost its former borough status and become simply a district of Leeds: real anger which cuts across party lines, at the removal of a local ability to make policy and institute changes, is commonplace in such areas.

A chapter in this book, 'Parish Councils for Cities', brings together recent evidence advocating democracy at the street or neighbourhood level. Surveys show that the majority of city dwellers had a mental map of a local territorial area. Collating these gave in Hornsey (part of the Greater London Borough of Haringey) about ten neighbourhood areas, and in Sheffield 65 discernible units; and a research report on eight Yorkshire and Oxfordshire parish councils confirmed 'the wide range and considerable extent of [their] activity. . . .'

That this 'extent of activity' has

now begun to be generated in our cities, confronted as they are with horrendous problems of urban decay, social deprivation and unemployment, is witnessed by the mushrooming of community groups. Liverpool has over two hundred, and in Covent Garden, London, this same process has led to the founding of a 'Forum of Representatives' with an electoral roll of 4,000 from those who reside and work in the area.

At 80p per copy, *Cities* is a gift which every political activist turns down at peril of finding himself heading downstream without oars to give some control to the tide-gripped boat.

ALAN SPENCE

Mistaken Identity: The Wrong Face of the Law
Peter Hain
Quartet, 184 pp, 90p

THE ARREST of the young Liberal leader, Peter Hain, on a charge of bank robbery proved to be a national sensation at the close of 1975. Hain contended that he was the victim of mistaken identity, an explanation which the jury accepted. In the present book, he retells the story with a great deal of detail, and any impartial reader must accept his defence. The charge was clearly fantastic and the evidence for the prosecution of the thinnest kind. Any case against Hain turned upon mistakes of identity although there would seem to be some doubt about the objective veracity of two schoolboys who gave evidence against him. What is worrying is the fact that the police saw fit to prosecute upon such evidence. So too are the circumstances of the arrest and the manner in which the identity evidence was obtained at the police station. It certainly looks as if the 'Judges' Rules' which are framed specifically to prevent inadmissible statements, were disregarded. For example, there was a long delay before Hain was allowed to see his solicitor, a grave disadvantage for the defence when questions of checking identity were raised.

But Hain's book is far more than an account of his own case. The experience led him to take an interest in the cases of other people who have been arrested and found guilty upon identification evidence, only to be released later when the evidence itself was found to be dubious in value or when somebody else had confessed to the crime. Hain goes into the details of several of the cases. He must cause disquiet to the ordinary citizen for accusations of this type could happen to anybody. A committee upon the subject presided over by Lord Devlin has now reported upon the question of identification evidence but, as Hain shows, it does not go far enough in reforming safeguards. As the matter stands, superiority in tactics is given to the police and it can lead to abuse. Hain ends his book with some practical proposals for reform and some very sensible advice concerning the best form of behaviour to adopt if the innocent citizen finds himself accused.

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

The Medical Risks of Life
Stephen Lock and Tony Smith
Penguin, 328 pp, 95p

'LIFE', 'health', 'medical' on any paperback with a brilliant cover design so often reveals some faddish contents on sexual or orgasmic inadequacy or extols the virtue of macrobiotic diets and clean living that *The Medical Risks of Life* was a delightful surprise.

A wide spectrum of topics relating to ill health in modern society is covered in a well-balanced, informative and unemotional manner. Sociological and environmental factors which influence the nation's health both now

and in the future are discussed in considerable depth.

All the hazards of living, from genetic heredity to suicide and vital statistics of death are comprehensively dealt with. There are chapters on diet, pets in the home, travel, work, sports, sex, contraception and birth. Perhaps the most important message is to inform the reader of the limitations of modern medical technology. Despite the wonders of surgery, antibiotics and vaccines, the main killing diseases—coronary thrombosis, strokes and advanced cancer—remain largely uncontrolled. What part do heredity, environment and pollution, self-medication and over-indulgence in alcohol, drugs and tobacco play?

These are some of the questions which the authors raise. They provide the reader with viewpoints based on factual evidence available to date. Undoubtedly they represent the views of the majority of the British medical profession.

Invaluable as an introduction to the young biology student, nurse, union worker and parent, some subjects may be dealt with in too much depth, but others would whet the appetite for further study. Medical students, health visitors and social workers would find it refreshing in putting their own roles into perspective. They, along with many doctors, might become more enthusiastic and militant in promoting health education in their practices, communities and industries.

I would urge those who have not had a classical education to struggle with the sometimes rather pedantic medical style and words. A very clear philosophical, medical and political message will be their reward. At this price, *Medical Risks of Life* should be on every trade union member's bookshelf.

MARGARET GILCHRIST

Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment
Hugh Stretton
CUP, 332 pp, £7.50

LEST readers expect that at long last a book has appeared which contrasts the approaches of capitalist and socialist states to the environment, let them be warned. The word 'left' is used *ad nauseam* in this book, but no systematic comparison of capitalist and socialist approaches is made. We find the US indexed on 36 pages, Britain on 26 and 'Germany, West' on seven. The USSR is indexed on seven and 'Germany, East' not at all. The references to socialist countries, where they occur, are snide and unhelpful.

P.S.

Speak for England
Melvyn Bragg
Secker & Warburg, 504 pp, £5.50

IT WOULD NOT be unkind to describe the people who speak in this book as middle class, lower middle class, with a sprinkling of farmers and a sprinkling of workers. There is nostalgia for a departed England, understandably, among the older people; perspectives for the future are completely absent: this is not what their minds are turned to, and this may well reflect the (unconscious) bias of the interviewer. Certainly, in the 1970s, in a rapidly changing world, in a Britain racked by inflation and unemployment, this does not seem to be a significant contribution to an understanding of the mind of Britain. The mood of backward-looking does not help.

By all means read it if it comes into your local library for its revelations of middle class, professional and frequently elderly outlooks on Britain, from a somewhat remote small town. But that they 'speak for England' is laughable; they sometimes have a job to speak for themselves.

BEN AINLEY

Christianity and Social Order
William Temple
Shepheard-Walwyn & SPCK,
120 pp, £1.20

BOOK PUBLISHERS are shrewd observers of the reading public. They have to be to stay in business. Therefore, when a book has a publishing history extending over 34 years its subject matter must be of more than passing interest. The link between *Christianity and Social Order* when it first appeared in 1942, and its current publication in 1976, is the permanent instability of the capitalist economic system and the strains it imposes on living a life worthy of human dignity.

Many hard-line 'materialist' philosophers may well ask: 'What right has the church to interfere?' It is recalled by William Temple that 'when a group of bishops attempted to bring government, coalowners and miners together in a solution of the disastrous coal strike of 1926, Mr Baldwin, then prime minister, asked how the bishops would like it if he referred to the Iron and Steel Federation the revision of the Athanasian Creed; and this was acclaimed as a legitimate score.' Efforts of men and women to change the social order have now given a deeper understanding to the dictum that 'an idea which grips the minds of the masses becomes a material force.' The millions of hard-working people who seek to live by the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ are such a 'material force'. They not only have a 'right' but a positive duty to interfere in the 'social order'. 'Materialists' should welcome their intervention.

This edition of *Christianity and Social Order* contains an extra bonus in the form of an introduction by Professor Ronald Preston of the University of Manchester. His reading references and commentary make this book a 'must buy', especially for participants in the Christian Marxist dialogue.

HARRY NEWTON

A Geography of the Soviet Union
John C. Dewdney
Pergamon, 170 pp, £1.90

FOR AN ALL-ROUND survey of the Soviet Union—its climate, vegetation, peoples, agriculture, resources, transport and much more—this modest book is good value. There is much politics in cold fact, and an exposition of the development of the Soviet Union's total resources (from its industrial-employed population to the virgin lands) carries many salutory lessons.

A.B.

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NO THANKS TO THE IMF

FROM many lips during the past month the words 'International Monetary Fund' have fallen. But not from ours: we have no international fund to sustain us. We had thought of applying to the IMF for a loan. Then our Business Committee discovered that the rule of one-man-one-vote did not operate at IMF board meetings, the voting being weighted according to the amount of capital a country puts in. We understand that one particular country has a virtual veto....

So we resolved instead to remind our readers that our costs are still rising steeply, and we live in the expectation that the steady stream of donations to our fund will continue. A regular contributor from Cornwall, who sent an extra donation to boost our total, wrote in appreciation of the November contents:

'The leading article on "Unemployment" is timely. At the St Austell employment exchange this month there were no vacancies, and the south-west district of the Building Trades Employers' Federation estimates that unemployment among their workers, now 25 per cent, will grow worse during the winter. Andrew Rothstein's article on "Socialist Harvest" certainly presents a contrast.'

If it hasn't hurt the Soviet Union to avoid IMF loans, we too may be proved right in relying on other resources. We hope our readers will give extra backing to *LM* as we face this New Year with grim determination. Contributions received in November gave us a very good start:

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Our thanks to you all.

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Victor Jara: His Life and Songs, edited by Ted Dicks. Elm Tree, 128 pp, £2.50.

Experiments with Everyday Objects, Kevin Goldstein-Jackson. Souvenir, 188 pp, £3.

The Greatest Thinkers, Edward de Bono and others. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 216 pp, £5.95.

The Contentious Tithe: The Tithe Problem and English Agriculture 1750-1850, Eric J. Evans. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 186 pp, £4.75.

Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol III, Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville. Macmillan, 236 pp, £20.

Lonrho: Portrait of a Multinational, S. Cronjé, M. Ling and G. Cronjé. Penguin, 316 pp, £1.50.

The Radicalisation of Science and *The Political Economy of Science*, edited by Hilary Rose and Steven Rose. Macmillan, 206 pp and 218 pp, £10 each.

The Quest for Mind, Howard Gardner. Quartet, 284 pp, £2.50.

Critical Sociology, edited by Paul Connerton. Penguin, 206 pp, £1.50.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Selwyn Lloyd. Jonathan Cape, 192 pp, £4.95.

Coal: Technology for Britain's Future, Jeremy Bugler and others. Macmillan, 144 pp, £4.95.

The Japan Reader: 1 Imperial Japan 1800-1945 and *2 Postwar Japan 1945 to the Present*, edited by Jon Livingston and others. Penguin, 518 pp and 600 pp, £1.75 each.

Nuclear Prospects: A Comment on the Individual, the State and Nuclear Power, Michael Flood and Robin Grove-White. Friends of the Earth, 64 pp, £1.

Your Pension, National Federation of Old Age Pensions Associations, 44 pp, 25p.

Southern Africa: Which Side is Britain On?, Jack Woddis. Communist Party, 12 pp, 20p.

CUT Journal, Trades Union Congress of Chile—London, 40 pp, 20p.

The alternative policies necessary for a prosperous Britain will come only from the labour movement

AUEW-TASS sends greetings to all engaged in the struggle for a socialist solution

Pat Lyons
President

Ken Gill
General Secretary

AUEW-TASS, Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond Surrey